



Project Ref/Title:	Ayr Riverside Block
Details:	Masterplan proposals for the Riverside Block, an important mixed use regeneration site on Ayr High Street with a prominent river frontage.
Location:	Ayr, South Ayrshire
Use type	Housing/Retail/Leisure/Arts/Office/Public Realm/Mixed Use
Client / Developer:	Ayr Renaissance
Lead Designer(s):	Niall McLaughlin Architects
Planning Authority:	South Ayrshire
Planning Ref:	16/01133/PPPM
Issue Date:	3 rd October 2016

Architecture & Design Scotland Consultation Response

Background

This response relates to proposals for mixed use development at 4-48 High Street, Ayr; the Ayr Riverside Block. It provides A&DS's appraisal of the proposals that were submitted with the planning application for Planning Permission in Principle, the masterplan document in particular. The proposals have been developed since our earlier advice on the project arising from A&DS Design Forum workshops held on 18th August and 15th September 2016. The appraisal supplements our earlier advice.

Summary Appraisal

We are encouraged by the quality and level of ambition of the developed design proposals. The further definition and strong illustration of the waterfront elevation is welcome in driving up aspirations for this important gateway – setting a standard and a level of quality in design to hold onto. However we are concerned that the masterplan is perhaps overly reliant on drawings and would benefit from a stronger expression of the underpinning analysis and design principles to clarify the intent for both urban form and regeneration strategy. On the other hand we also consider that the High Street elevation needs to be further developed as a linking framework at this stage. Whilst we recognise the limited capacity to address this at this advanced stage we consider that some supplementary work would be beneficial and a basis for our support. This is set out in the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1: Wider Vision

The wider aspirational framework of public realm improvement, of which the waterfront proposition forms an integral part, needs to be more fully recorded and the elements of this defined. Some of the contextual thinking and analysis that underpins the current proposals could beneficially be set out in terms of the role of the site within Ayr, historical development patterns, vennel structure and movement, particularly along the river. To this should be added definition of how the riverfront walk is intended to be continued and integrated at either side of both bridges. It should include defined public realm proposals for the proposed 'River Square' and including the proposed transformation of the north bank of the River Ayr, opposite the site.

2: High Street Frontage

A further level of articulation of design intent for the High Street and New Bridge Street Frontages would be beneficial. We consider this should be treated as of equal importance to the riverfront elevation with further detail of design intent generally, further articulation at juxtaposition with retained buildings and a detailed sample elevation as for the waterfront. We would advocate the inclusion of active frontages at street level along the length of the High Street elevation and the amalgamation of plots 1 and 2 as a continuous frontage, with a pend at street level.

3: Sample Elevation

It would be helpful to annotate the sample elevation shown on page 43 and include a further similar sample elevation for the High Street frontage to set out characteristics that these drawings exemplify and that reflect important design principles including tripartite form, defined roof set-backs, structural expression, consistency of material expression, street level activity, roof level accessibility etc. The wording might more helpfully be expressed as 'illustrative' and 'for guidance' than 'indicative' and 'open to interpretation', to highlight the role of these drawings whilst anticipating alternative solutions within a common set of rules.

4: Landscape Framework and Public Realm

Landscape design detail and design intent needs to be set out to highlight important qualities and characteristics intended for soft and hard landscape – including distinctions between design of the waterfront edge, the square, courtyards, vennels and characteristics along the High Street. This needs to highlight distinctions between relatively private, semi-public and public

areas as well as carriageways, shared surfaces, access and servicing. This could beneficially include proposals for the accessible roof terraces. This should set out more explicitly the intent for providing an access route into the site off Old Bridge Street.

5: Phasing

The various phasing diagrams could be more consistent, showing in particular that the public square and public access from High Street to waterfront will be included in phase 1.

6: Meanwhile Form

As before we would prefer the retention of High Street buildings (e.g. Nos 20 –24) during the meanwhile form of the site and until such time as plots 3 and 5 are developed, to avoid a longterm gap in the High Street. Otherwise the strategies for managing meanwhile uses proposed are welcomed.

7: Design Principles

Some of the wording undermines the clarity of purpose of the document e.g. Page 30, 4.7 "Exceptions may be acceptable to the planning authority and must be clearly indicated and justified in detail as part of any future planning applications". Generally it would be helpful to highlight the priority design principles underpinning plans, site sections and street elevations to allow greater flexibility than reliance on the drawings alone as a reference point. This could be done by way of a short supplemental design code that defines what is mandatory as against what is illustrative or elements of guidance.